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A Survey of Bulgarian Literature

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538 One of the most characteristic features of modern
517 Bulgarian literature is its militant assertion of its life and it expresses this assertion by an unceasing struggle for social and political ideals and by a constant pursuit of an artistic perfection in which the esthetic ideal is absorbed and transfigured in order to pass over the line of demarcation between art and reality.

A democrat by nature, the Bulgarian cannot tolerate much of aristocracy. He wishes cultural values to be made accessible for all, so that all can derive profit from
000 them. Thus in the tenth century when darkness still covered Western Europe, a Bulgarian ecclesiastical writer, the Presbyter Kozma, exclaims in anger: "Thou, rich man, who hast in abundance all the books of the Old and New Testaments and other books filled with instructive words and who knowest all of them, hast thou not understood that thou must lay down thy soul for thy neighbors? Why dost thou bar the road for the salvation of mankind by hiding the Word of God from thy brothers? Those books which thou hast stored away were written that through them all men might be saved, and not that they might be devoured by worms and mildew. Therefore, thou man, do not shut thyself up in thy library and do not hide the Word of God from those who

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000 seek to read it and copy it and be thou content, that with it thou canst save thy brother."

These remarks of the Presbyter Kozma are striking and at the same time prophetic, since he predicted here the role which books would play in Bulgaria, just as he also foresaw that eight centuries later, his people would be awakened from the spiritual lethargy of five hundred years of the Turkish yoke, or as the Bulgarian poet Vazov said, "that there will be an end of history and they will become a nation", by the books of an inspired patriot. These books passed from hand to hand in manuscript copies to play in Bulgaria the role of the life-giving elixir which aroused the tsar's daughter from the magic sleep which an evil spirit had cast upon her.

175 814 The book which the Bulgarian regards as the corner-stone of his present libefty and which is reflected in all modern Bulgarian literature is the "History of the Slav Bulgarians" by Paisi of Hilendar, a monk of Mount Athos.

In the eighteenth century the Bulgarian people had lost nearly all national self-confidence as a result of the Turkish yoke and the propaganda of the Pan-Hellenic idea by the Greek clergy and they seemed on the point of disappearing. Then Paisi, as the first of a series of clerical and lay writers who supported the feeble study of Bulgarian letters under the Turkish yoke, felt the significance which a knowledge of the past might have for the continued existence of his people and the importance to them of an understanding of the bases of its national culture. In 1762 he commenced a manuscript "History" (there were then no printing presses in Bulgaria) to remind his contemporaries that despite the oppression and

the contempt of the Turks and Greeks, they did not need 175
to be ashamed of their own traditions. In the past the 814
Bulgarians had had their own empire and had received tribute from the wise Greeks and they had had the most progressive tsars and patriarchs of all the Slavonic peoples and they had been among the first peoples to accept the Christian faith, which they had later handed on with a rich literature to the other Slavs.

With its poetic inspiration and its ardent love for his [186]
country, the History of Paisi appeared as a torch to kindle the lowly and undeveloped national consciousness of Bulgaria. It set it ablaze and thus caused the surprising advance of the Bulgarian people. In one century 2/n they turned from an amorphous mass to one of the strongest nationalities of the Balkans. They raised their level of culture, and developed their art, science and literature.

It goes without saying that the History of Paisi could 538
not have worked this miracle, if it had not found a fertile 814
soil in the souls of the Bulgarian people, and more than 186
that, if the soil had not been cultivated by a long series of enthusiastic imitators of Paisi. Between 1800 and 1850 these writers, without stopping, first in manuscripts and later in printed books, continued to arouse the national consciousness of the Bulgarians and to spread enlightenment in their native land. The aims of these men were purely practical. The definite object of Sofrony Vratchanski, of Neofit Bozveli, of Neofit Rilski in their works which are almost always of a didactic character, was to help their people, to educate them and to lead them on the path of proper development. Yet so strong and so inspired was the love that these men had for their

2/n [i.e. the eighteenth century --- Analyst]

538 people that without their endeavor, their works became
814 works of art and formed a stage in the development of
186 Bulgarian literature and the Bulgarian literary language. This gradually evolved under the guidance of the democratic spirit of the authors from the dead Church language which had predominated in the work of Paisi, until it approximated the Bulgarian colloquial dialects on which the modern language is based.

538 Not a little credit for the formation and crystalization
186 of the Bulgarian literary language and the development of modern Bulgarian literature must be given to the writers who walked in the steps of Paisi and his school and who were also public spirited men. This last circumstance explains the fact that the list of the most prominent authors includes the names of those Bulgarians who in the epoch preceding the political liberation of Bulgaria, the period between 1840 and 1875, took the leading and most self-sacrificing part in the cultural struggle for their country, for its spiritual awakening and its ecclesiastical independence, who fought in the revolting bands of various heroes, who worked inside the country in various revolutionary committees or with the Central Committee in Bucharest (Rumania was already free), and who thus tried in every way to secure the liberation of their country. Thus, whether we consider the men who appealed for aid in the struggles for ecclesiastical and national independence or list the writers or the leaders in any popular movement, we always come upon the names of Rakovski, Lyuben Karavelov, Drumev, and above all Khristo Botev.

The character of Sava Rakovski (1821-1867) is especially interesting and original in this group. He worked

between 1840 and 1847 and we can say without exaggeration that he became a poet with the definite patriotic aim of adding the power of the living word to the other means which he was employing in the service of his people. For participating in conspiracies within the Turkish Empire, Rakovski lay for three years in a prison in Constantinople and later he organized a revolting band with which he operated in the Balkans. At the same time he composed the poem "A Mountain-Wanderer", he published journalistic articles, and made studies in folklore, all with the one aim of arousing the Bulgarians to revolt against the Turkish yoke, of giving them faith in their own power, and of convincing them that they are one of the chosen peoples of the earth, who are assured of a glorious future. Like Paisi and his followers, Rakovski was so inspired by his love for his country that he became a true poet and towers among his people not only for his personal heroism but for his books which won hundreds of adherents for the idea of Bulgarian independence.

The same is true of Lyuben Karavelov (1837-1879), for between 1870 and 1875 he took a personal part in the revolutionary struggle of the Bulgarians and he had great political influence as one of the founders of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee. Yet he left a still greater reputation from his literary work which he treated as part of his patriotic mission. Like his contemporaries, he had a definitely practical aim—to arouse the spirit of the Bulgarians and urge them to struggle; amid the difficulties and tragedies of the time in which he worked, he kindled the souls of his people, became inspired himself and was turned into a true artist. Thus it was granted

538 to him to write such stories as the "Child of Mamin" and
186 "Bulgarians of the Old Times." These have permanent value and are more and more highly regarded for their clever observation and understanding and the realistic manner in which they picture the life and manners of the people in the little Bulgarian cities at the middle of the nineteenth century, and they are still counted among the most happy productions of Bulgarian artistic prose.

Another man who was primarily interested in public work was Vasil Drumev (1841-1901), who in 1872, following the steps of the first Bulgarian theatrical writer Dobri Voynikov, wrote a historical drama "Ivanku" which is one of the best Bulgarian dramas. Unfortunately Drumev did not find in literature a satisfactory outlet for his patriotism and his desire to aid his people and therefore after finishing "Ivanku" he entered the priesthood and devoted himself exclusively to educational and political activity, a clear example of the way in which the Bulgarian writers of this period were led by patriotism to commence or to terminate literary and artistic work.

This same patriotic fervor developed and forged Petko Rachev Slaveykov (1827-1895), one of the greatest Bulgarian poets of the older epoch, a man who exerted great influence on later Bulgarian literature. Slaveykov became a poet quite accidentally, in furtherance of his patriotic aims. His first poem was a satire, which he wrote when he was barely 16 or 17 against Ilarion, Bishop of Tirnovo, a Greek by nationality and a well-known Bulgarophobe. This commenced his struggles against the Greek clergy and the Turkish government which filled his entire life. While Slaveykov was wandering as a teacher throughout the whole of Bulgaria,

unable to remain long in any one spot because of the persecutions of his enemies, he began to write lyric poems to take the place of the Greek love songs, which were then sung throughout Bulgaria and which were a powerful factor in the Hellenizing of the educated Bulgarians. To aid the Bulgarian national rebirth, Slaveykov became a journalist and edited a satirical journal and later a political paper. Then from patriotic motives, he commenced the enormous task of translating the Gospels with the support of the American Bible Society. But the social-literary activity of Slaveykov did not exhaust his powers; it merely inspired the poet in minutes of quiet reflection to write some of the most beautiful lyric productions of Bulgarian literature. In 1927 when the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Slaveykov was being celebrated— his poems, although they had been neglected by the younger generation, showed the sincerity, deep sensitiveness and warm feeling of their author and again won high regard. 538 186

Far above these writers of the pre-independence period, above Lyuben Karavelov, Drumev, and Petko Slaveykov, stands the dazzling and blinding Khristo Botev. Botev is the greatest Bulgarian poet and the most revered national hero. His short life created a mass of legends and these legends are even now repeated in Bulgaria from north to south and he wins all hearts by the clarity, beauty, and moral earnestness of his actions.

Khristo Botev (1848-1876) was born in the middle of the nineteenth century in Kalofer, a city in the Balkans not far from the celebrated Valley of Roses. His father was a good and enlightened teacher but he was loyal to

538 the Turkish government. At home Khristo was trained
186 to quiet and self-restraint but from his early years he felt in his veins the urging to a revolt against the Turkish oppressors and against the lamb-like toleration of his contempararies, especially their leaders (the Chorbadji), who looked upon every attempt to rouse the people against the Turks with even greater horror and consternation than did the Turks themselves. Who knows what would have happened to Botev in his little native city, where his patriotic revolutionary tendencies would have led him to ruin and destruction and where they could not have been guided and enlightened, had his father not sent him to Russia when he was 17? There in the land of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Turgenev, Botev developed his character, thought over his career, and learned that he was to sacrifice himself for his people. But to sacrifice one's self in the best sense of the word, is to acquire unconquerable power— the power of a symbol, which cannot be separated from the conscience of the nation for which it serves as a noble example. His decision once made, Botev strove stubbornly and constantly to carry out his aims: to lay down his life for his country, without any other idea than that, as he puts it in one of his ballads, the people should some day say of him, "He died, poor man, for truth and freedom."

The last years of Botev's life were stormy. He remained in Russia until 1867; then for a short time he was a teacher in his native city, but later, instead of returning, as his father wished, to complete his education in Russia and become a physician, he emigrated to Rumania and began to prepare himself for active revolutionary work in Bulgaria. He became a member of

the Central Revolutionary Committee, edited the journals Budilnik (Alarm) and Zname (Banner), suffered poverty and maintained himself by writing and teaching. He finally wearied of emigré life and foreign conspiracies which revolted him by their uselessness and the atmosphere of intrigue with which they were surrounded. In 1876, when he was 28 years old, the revolts broke out in Bulgaria which gave the Turks the excuse for the reprisals characterized by Gladstone as the Bulgarian atrocities. Botev organized his own revolutionary band of about 200 men, seized an Austrian steamship, the "Radetski", crossed the Danube, landed on the Bulgarian coast and prepared to fight with his comrades for the liberation of his people. He failed to receive assistance from his compatriots and three days later he fell dead on the Vola, a barren Balkan height, and no one knows the location of his grave. 538 /86

Thus the life of Botev is filled with the beauty of active self-sacrifice and with harmony between preaching and action. This beauty is increased by one remarkable fact; that it is dominated and permeated by the gleam of a poetical inspiration which surges in direct proportion to the revolutionary activity of Botev and is its direct expression. This inspiration he poured out in 22 poems, but among these are the most pieces of Bulgarian authorship; the ballad "Hadji Dimitar" and the lyric poems, "To my first love", "May", "On farewell", etc.

To analyze the poems of Botev without being able to cite them is sacrilegious for a Bulgarian and it is impossible to translate them. We can only say in characterization of them that they arose incidentally amid 538

538 the stormy life of Botev as sparks of molten gold which reflected his ardent soul. They speak the language of Botev; they are diverse in content and rhythm and dazzle by their imagery. Full of undoubted originality, they are sketched with an economy of means such as only world-poets use. The poems of Botev are short and yet they embrace much. Every element is powerful and harmonious and like an unexpected flash of lightning each directly affects the feeling of the reader, so that he understands easily and surely the aim and idea of Botev's life, love for his country, above which there is nothing in the world and for the liberation of which, if a man falls, "he does not die, but even the animals and nature mourn for him and the bards sing in his honor", as he says in one of his poems.

How true these thoughts of Botev were can be seen from the fact that after fifty years every Bulgarian mourns for him. His name is echoed in the defiles of the Balkan Mountains and the broad Thracian and Danubian plains and rings without ceasing in the souls of the Bulgarians as the expression of the finest man whom their country has brought forth.

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538 The gigantic shadow of Botev falls across the gulf
186 which separates enslaved from free Bulgaria, for as is well known, the country was separated from Turkey as an autonomous principality as a result of the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-8. On the later side of the gulf stands the figure of another great poet, balancing the work of Botev. This man has a significance for Bulgarian culture and Bulgarian literature, if we estimate this by direct and evident influence, perhaps even greater than

has Botev. It is Ivan Vazov who first carried the fame of Bulgarian literature beyond the boundaries of his native land and whose activity of 50 years from 1872 to 1921 witnessed the joys and hopes of young Bulgaria, its heroic struggles for national unification and the crushing failure of these hopes in 1918 and who was a sensitive echo of all the joys and sorrows of his country. 538 186

Ivan Vazov (1850-1921) is the first Bulgarian poet who gave expression to his patriotism not by direct public work— as did his predecessors— but exclusively by unceasing artistic production through which he strove to express all that he saw in his country: its nature, its people, and also the ideals towards which it should strive. Bulgaria in all its manifold aspects— that is the content of the literary work of Vazov, who sacrificed to his inspiration his personal life and all his other interests, so that he could offer it worthy service solemnly and convincingly.

The sacrifice which Vazov offered to his country was not in vain. There is no Bulgarian writer who so truly and accurately reflects his country as does Vazov. There is no Bulgarian writer like Vazov whose works demand the attention of every foreigner who would know Bulgaria.

For example, if a man is interested in the past of Bulgaria, let him turn to the historical dramas of Vazov on themes from the old Bulgarian Empire, or his "Legends of Tsarevets", which describe touchingly the struggles between Bulgaria and Byzantium. If he seeks the less distant past or the rebirth of Bulgaria, he has the splendid "Epic of the Heroes", in which he represents as in living marble the figures of Paisi, Rakovski, 175 538 186

538 Levski and the Brothers Milandinovi. If he wishes to
186 learn of the uprisings which were the indirect cause of
175 the liberation of Bulgaria and turned the attention of Western Europe to its fate, he can read the best novel of Vazov, "Under the Yoke" which has been translated into every culture-language and which describes with surprising artistry the life of a Balkan city before the liberation, the secret work of the group of rebels, the uprising which they prepare and which the Turks suppress with fire and sword. If he desires to understand the life of the newly liberated Bulgaria, he can find what he seeks in the novels of Vazov as "The New Land" and the "Empress Kazalar." If he would know how Bulgaria passed through the series of war which she waged, in which she conquered heroically without being able to reap any profit from her victories, he must turn again to Vazov and to his many collections of poetry, in which we find expression of all the pains of Bulgaria, all her hopes and disillusionments. Thus every one must turn to Vazov who wishes to know of Bulgaria with her landscape, her fields and mountains, the Balkans, Rilo and Rhodope, the Danube and the Black Sea.

538 It is superfluous to list the works of Vazov, for this would be merely the listing of all the inner and outer characteristics of Bulgaria in a perfect mirror. It is better to say that their significance is to be found not only in the fact that they focus as in a lens everything that is important in Bulgarian life but that this is done artistically, with the aid of a talent which is gifted for both poetry and prose, and which produces its effects with great music of phrase, vividness of imagery, a

wealth and freshness of poetic language, and an originality of poetic thought. 538

With such powers, Vazov— who had the additional merit of first acquainting Bulgarian literature with the tendencies of the Western literatures, especially French Romanticism— could not fail to exert an enormous influence on the social life of his day and even more on the literary life. Without his influence Bulgarian artistic literature would never have reached its present height, its poetry would not have been so enriched with rhythmic excellences, its prose would not have been inspired to discuss such complicated and interesting themes. The impulse exerted by Vazov on the literature of his country is one of the most glorious monuments to his talent and to the consciousness that he had as to his social mission. Conscious too of his duties as a national poet, Vazov, during the entire fifty years of his activity, never for a single moment laid down his pen and tried not to leave a single form of literature in which he had not experimented. He succeeded so well that he discovered new fields: he created new forms which his successors were to develop and he opened new paths from which not even the most advanced modernists have yet passed. A poet and a pioneer and in many fields still unsurpassed, that is what Vazov can say of himself. [17]

One of the first to follow in the footsteps of Vazov was his friend, Konstantin Velichkov (1855-1907), who suffered much because of his enthusiastic love of art and his indifference to money. He had much to struggle against but he succeeded in leaving behind him three monuments, which will maintain his name in the roll of honor of Bulgarian culture. One monument is the

538 Academy of Art, which he founded in 1896, when he was Minister of Education. The two others were a magnificent translation of Dante's "Inferno" and a volume of "Letters from Rome" which can be compared with the finest examples of Western epistolary art. Not a few gems are also hidden in the poetry of Velichkov, especially in his lyrics.

Another writer who followed from the beginning in the steps of Vazov is Todor G. Vlaykov, who uses the pen-name Veselin (1865-). He was also an enthusiast for his country like Velichkov, and all his predecessors but unlike these— and this is a mark of the new period in Bulgarian literature which began at the end of the nineteenth century— he did not attempt to express so insistently his social and patriotic ideas in his writings. Vlaykov shows his love for his people by making careful sketches of the village life in a semi-realistic, semi-idealistic manner and he endeavors to express the positive qualities which hide in the soul of the Bulgarians and can be most clearly seen among the villagers: love of labor, stubborn pursuit of a definite goal, chastity in the relations between man and woman, and ardent love for the family. In the depiction of these positive qualities T. G. Vlaykov is unwearying. In this field he published the "Grandson of Grandsir Slachov" and two other stories at the age of 63 after a long pause caused by active political work, and he achieved success in them.

Near to Vazov's style of writing and his active feeling for Bulgarian reality stands Anton Strashimirov (1872-), a restless spirit, who during his entire literary activity which lasted almost 40 years, could not find time to train himself, to decide what he wished to become, a writer

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with social interests or a pure artist, and who in consequence never succeeded in creating anything with unity. Yet in some of the novels of Strashimirov and in one or two of his dramas, we feel the pulse of a real inspiration. This is revealed chiefly in the ability of the author in picturing the tragedy of the commonplace, the despotism of convention, and the injustice of class distinctions. 538

Strashimirov with his social bent, the tendencious character of his writing, his willingness to condemn, learned also from another author of this period, who in his desire to use his poetical gifts for the inculcation of ideas and opinions in the souls of his compatriots reminds us of the writers of the pre-liberation era. This author, Stoyan Mikhaylovski (1856-1927) developed satire in Bulgarian literature, first political and social satire and later satire of morals. Gifted with a keen insight into the imperfections of mankind, boiling with rage against them, cherishing a truly moral feeling and a developed philosophic mind, Mikhaylovski, with considerable artistic talent, might have played a primary role in the Bulgarian social movement and have left a deep impression on the literature of his country, if he had had that quality which every preacher, every prophet, every merciless scourge of the defects of humanity must possess— the capacity to love those whom he scolds, to pity those whom he chastizes. Mikhaylovski was cold and self-contained and therefore his satire, although it awakes admiration and is in general just, is not felt as such and it could not produce the favorable effect which it might have had, if we felt in it that the poet wrote with sorrow in his soul and with a desire to help

538 his victims and was not merely venting his own embitterment.

The work of another author of the nineties had this beneficial effect on Bulgarian social life. It was the work of a master of social and political satire like Mikhaylovski but much milder, more enlightened, more loving than he. This book which with Vazov's novel "Under the Yoke" is one of the most popular in Bulgaria, comes from the pen of Aleko Konstantinov (1863-1897) and is a cross between a chronicle and a novel; it consists of a series of loosely connected episodes from the life of one person Bay-Ganyu (the title of the book), who typifies the middle-class Bulgarian as he was in the first years after the liberation: clever, suspicious, but bold and self-reliant, not too cultured, not too able but yet rather clever in solving problems in which he seeks too much for subtlety, energetic, obstinately firm and in the depths of his soul not bitter, not spoiled, able to reform.

[829] The value of the satire of Aleko Konstantinov, which is filled with humor, lies in the faith that Bay-Ganyu, the ordinary Bulgarian can change, that the evils from which he suffers are only temporary, that they are a result of the bad influences resulting from the Turkish yoke. These people deserve to be rebuked, but should be ridiculed rather than condemned irrevocably. Thus Aleko Konstantinov saves his victims, for his laughter is not cruel and does not slay completely. The book is salutary and gives a true picture of Bulgarian life in the epoch which it describes, much truer than the bitter satires of Mikhaylovski, and so Aleko Konstantinov, although he was not so serious a thinker as Mikhaylovski, yet holds a more important place in Bulgarian literature and his

hero has an immortal place and the sympathy of all those who are interested in literary types. 538

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Aleko Konstantinov ends the series of authors of the period between 1880 and 1900 in whose works the social elements predominate over the purely aesthetic and who use artistic effects merely to proclaim social ideas and to realize patriotic or universal spiritual ideals. 517 538

After the death of Aleko Konstantinov who was killed in a political brawl in 1899, we no longer meet authors who aim to express characteristic features of the national life. The political life of the country was becoming more settled. Bulgaria was growing stronger, with confidence in its future and its political independence and the old problems ceased to be of all absorbing interest. New problems appeared,— chiefly of a cultural nature. The epoch of spiritual development was commencing, in which the artists played a role not of social workers but of leaders bidden to satisfy the immaterial needs of their compatriots. In the new epoch the Bulgarian writers turned their attentions to the emptiness which they beheld in the cultural life of their country, and they began to construct channels into which the spiritual life of the land could flow. They came to the conviction that they could best serve their country by leaving to the statesmen the necessary ordering of its material well-being and striving themselves as artists to enrich its spiritual treasury with values of esthetic importance, which were now more vital than the purely material interests.

It is not surprising that with such a transfer of the centre of interest the new writers should start a reaction

538 against the old and against those authors who had based
517 their art on the desire to give practical help to Bulgaria. The new art could not fail to take a position directly opposite to that of the older school, the dean of which was Ivan Vazov.

As we might expect, the three authors who at the beginning of the twentieth century directed the new movement for the invigoration of Bulgarian literature, Pencho Slaveykov, P. K. Yavorov, and P. Yu. Todorov, declared an open struggle against the influence of Vazov. Today we see that this struggle, which for a while seemed to be between representatives of irreconcilable schools, was unnecessary, that there was no yawning gulf between Vazov and the three younger men, that both sides had much in common, that they were both competent, had a serious idea of their poetical functions which they understood as a real mission to help their neighbors, and did not lose themselves in a struggle over abstract principles. Today we see the influence which his opponents exerted on Vazov and the aid which his ability gave them for the struggle against him. Since Slaveykov, Yavorov and Todorov introduced a new element into Bulgarian literature, their struggle with Vazov can be explained as the obvious development of a new and really independent group.

538 At the head of this group is Pencho Slaveykov (1866-
517 1912), son of the old Petko Slaveykov, whom we have
177 mentioned above. Pencho Slaveykov drew his new ideas from Germany where he lived for a while and where he felt the Hellenic influence of Goethe, the lyric and heroic humor of Heine and the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. These influences, combined with

those of Russian literature, led Pencho Slaveykov to 538
break through the limitations of his lyric talents and to 517
create works which have significance for world literature 177
as well as for Bulgaria. The success of Pencho Slaveykov can be judged by the fact that in 1910, when an attempt was made to win the Nobel Prize in Literature for a Bulgarian poet, Pencho Slaveykov was put forward as a candidate, and had it not been for his premature death in 1912 at the age of 46, he would probably have received it. His poetic work which is really inferior to that of Vazov in substance and direct inspiration is superior to it in depth of thought and in its richness in universal problems, which the poet seeks to solve with artistic perfection. Slaveykov is the first conscious esthete among Bulgarian writers and he has also a deeply philosophical intellect. His ripe thought, tinged with pessimism and tempered with stoicism, enlightens and permeates the heavy, golden-sweet honey of his works—his splendid "Epic Songs", his tender lyric collection "Dream of Happiness", his original anthology "On the Islands of the Blessed". In this the poet under the pretence of translating from various foreign poets prints his own poems and he reveals various aspects of his creative personality in a series of clever biographical notes. His thought stands out and gives power to the "Song of Blood", an epic in which Slaveykov describes the uprising of 1876 and in which he tries to emphasize the salient characteristics of the Bulgarians, to explain the objects of their struggles and the nature of their oppression by the Turks, and by drawing a broad panorama of Bulgarian social life before the liberation, to predict the future of his country. It is further remarkable that

538 Slaveykov, although he based his poetic work on phil-
517 osophical and esthetic principles which he adopted from
177 Western Europe, yet remained loyal to the fundamental characteristic of all Bulgarian writers; he did not spurn reality, did not lose himself in impossible intellectual speculations, did not give up his love for his native land, but everywhere in his work he aimed to do good service to his fatherland. Because of this Pencho Slaveykov succeeded in creating works which were thoroughly intelligible to people who knew nothing of Bulgaria and which were yet as Bulgarian in substance as were those of his father Petko Slaveykov or Ivan Vazov. Such recognition is a mark of the high praise which Bulgarians accord his works.

538 Many consider the close friend and companion of Pencho Slaveykov, Peyu Yavorov (1878-1914), to be more gifted and significant than he, and without doubt, although he did not have the philosophical nature of Slaveykov, he was a more inspired and skilful artist. Yavorov enriched Bulgarian literature with nuances which had previously been unknown. He acquainted it with a great number of problems which perplex the modern man, as he is torn between a materialistic view of life and idealistic aspirations.

This struggle between faith and unbelief, between the need to devote himself unreservedly to a cause and the attempt to prove to his consciousness that such a sacrifice is superfluous, between an intuitive acceptance of all truths and a lack of confidence in human reason, between a deep and almost religious reverence for woman and an aversion to her, is the subject of his writings and is also the distinguishing mark of the life of Yavorov.

His life was one of suffering, an eternal ascending to the 538
heights and a constant falling to the depths, an eternal beating against the icy wall which separates man from absolute truth, a constant interchange of joy and disillusionment which leave a bloody trail on all the productions of his martyr life.

Although discord reigned in the soul of Yavorov, as he sought a real equilibrium, his poetry breathes only harmony. His language is unusually melodious, his rhythm is more diverse than that of any of his predecessors. The internal melody is more intensive than any which we find in the works of the preceding epoch. Here by his keen feeling for the melodic character of the verse, Yavorov continues the tradition of the old Bulgarian bards, the anonymous authors of the Bulgarian folk songs, all of whom were musicians, if we may judge by the sound of their productions. Yavorov also represents modern man as he tries to become intelligible to all the world and to be understood by strangers as well as by his neighbors. When his country calls him to make sacrifices, he is ready to lay down his life for it. He has a broad view of human sins and contradictions, the relations between man and woman, and he can portray a family tragedy, the mystery of which is only now being revealed.

All these contrasts in the soul of Yavorov, his struggles with himself and with the world are reflected in his works: the collection of poems, the "Shadows of the Clouds" which contain his most beautiful works and a wealth of motifs; his two dramas and the interesting memories of the years 1905-6, when he was struggling as an insurgent in Macedonia. For foreigners this work

538 has especial interest, since it compares Yavorov with his predecessors and it shows the union of purely Bulgarian features and universal aspirations, which are so typical of Yavorov who was both a Bulgarian and a member of the modern family of men with all of the contradictions involved.

To become a modern man and to be at the same time a Bulgarian and a Western European was the object of the third member of this group, Petko Yu. Todorov [177] (1879-1916). As a dramatist and an author of refined and elegant idyls, he introduced into his country the influence of Ibsen and he also strove to ennoble the Bulgarian folk songs and tales by using the material for original planned works, some of which have a symbolistic tendency. Todorov zealously strove to introduce into the Bulgarian palette those esthetic and philosophical principles, which seemed to him a logical outcome of literary and social development, and he did not realize at times that some of these principles were alien to the Bulgarian soul. As a result of this he did not find full freedom in the use of the folk lore material, which he might have used on a large scale. His best work are his idyls. These, the best in this form that Bulgaria has yet produced, were insufficiently valued when they appeared but now fifteen years after the death of the poet, they find conscious or unconscious imitation, especially in the works of the youngest writers with their slogan "Back to the native". We can see today that the dramas of Todorov, despite the contradictions between the symbolistic elements adopted from Ibsen and the tales and songs which are drawn from national sources, will also have a revival. The author's dramatic merits are great

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and many authors since his day have followed his path in drawing material from the folk beliefs and legends. 538

A contemporary of Pencho Slaveykov, Yavorov and Todorov, although he was not their friend but can now claim to share with them in the esteem in bringing Western influence into the native literature of his people is Kiril Khristov (1875-). He first attracted attention as a poet of passionate love and of fervent aspirations; later he created a large amount of lyric poetry in the folk style, but with the spiritual experiences of a highly developed man. He also created epics, dramas and novels, in which the most characteristic features are passion, a thirst for life, a stubborn movement toward distant horizons and a revolt against suffering and oppression in life, an element which gives Khristov a place not far from Vazov, Pencho Slaveykov and Todorov.

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The major part of the work of the poets of whom we have just spoken was done before 1912, before the Balkan Wars which mark a dividing line in both the political and cultural life of Bulgaria. The same period saw the rise of two other authors, who are still working, but whose spirit, interests and temperament belong to the past age, which they manifest by a calm, a wisdom, and a light scepticism which is lacking to the modern authors.

One of these writers is Dimitar Ivanov, known under the pen-name of Elin Pelin (1878-). He was born in a village not far from Sofia and in his two volumes of stories and his two novels he expresses all the outstanding features of the Bulgarian villager: sober realism, a

538 keen love for the land and the tools whereby this is worked, a feeling of close kinship with nature, a natural and unspiteful cleverness and humor. Although he is in his works a typical Bulgarian, Elin Pelin has under the influence of Vazov, Pencho Slaveykov and Yavorov and by his acquaintance with modern European literature, been permeated with the spirit of modern life, has deepened his observations and has been developed intellectually. Thanks to this he has elevated stories on strictly Bulgarian themes into tales that are accessible and interesting to the entire world. We can say with certainty that Elin Pelin is an excellent stylist and that next to Vazov he is the Bulgarian author whose works have been most translated into foreign languages and who is more popular at home than other writers who have perhaps deeper themes but less solid material, directness and naive artistry.

Another writer who like Elin Pelin did his chief work before 1912 is Georgi Stamatov (1869-), the most careful and serious psychologist and analyst among Bulgarian prose writers. His stories are so delicately and elaborately wrought that they arouse in the readers feelings of terror and delight. Stamatov (a good type of the completely modern man) busies himself especially with the relations of man and woman, marriage and all elements on which this is often based. For many years a judge, he deals also with the conflicts which take place in a humane man between his moral feeling, his virtues, and the need of protecting himself and society against all dangers. In discussing every theme, he shows his keen glance, his ability to dissect character, his sardonic smile, behind which there is not bitterness as is the case with

Mikhaylovski, but a tolerant and mild humaneness which remains from the good pre-war times with their quiet and satisfaction. 538

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This humanity and this wisdom which we see in Stamatov and the writers of his period, are a reflection of the Slavonic elements in the Bulgarian people and were most clearly shown while Bulgaria lived a happy and free life. Since the war with its attendant sufferings and the revival of memories of the Turkish yoke, these qualities are disappearing, partially if not wholly, or are being eclipsed by other elements which are appearing in literature. The national catastrophes which Bulgaria suffered after the Balkan Wars and the World War, when she was forbidden union with Macedonia, the hardships inflicted by the unjust treaty of peace, and the material deprivations embittered all the Bulgarians and took from them their self-confidence and the internal peace with which they were rising to cultural perfection and social well-being. The people turned their attention inwards, to the problems of the soul, questions of life and death, social and class conflicts. They sought in their own past the causes and the explanations of the misfortunes which they had undergone and interested themselves in their national qualities and defects, in which lay the basis for their future success or failure. 538 178

As a result of this change in the Bulgarian character, in political life there came a strengthening of partisan struggles, and sharp division into schools in the field of literature. Each of these sought to solve in its own way the problems resulting from the changes in the social and the psychological life of the people. 538

538 The most striking example of this new attitude is the appearance of mysticism, something which had not been hitherto observed in Bulgarian literature and which was really foreign to the sober spirit of the people. After the war this manifested itself first in the members of all kinds of sects which suddenly appeared and which were composed of people who were suffering directly or indirectly from the general catastrophe and who felt the need of some religious consolation which at the time could not be supplied by the national Church. This mysticism appeared in certain writers where it is not only a result of the war but is also a distant echo of that social-mystical movement, Bogomilism, which revolutionized the whole of Bulgaria during the 10th and 11th centuries and which was carried from there into Italy and France where it begot the sects of the Albigenses and became one of the causes of the Reformation.

Among the Bulgarian mystical writers the first place belongs to Ivan Grozev (1872-), a quiet and retiring poet, who eternally wanders into the world of legends which is populated with demons and angels, dragons and marvels supernatural but nevertheless real. He enthusiastically confines these creatures in poetry which is filled with the anxious aspiration for purity and redeeming sufferings and humble submission to unknown powers which guide us and can conduct us to a good land, if we will but follow. Grozev's most interesting works are his poems and some of his dramas in which his mystical feeling is strengthened by a philosophic idea which intuitively reaches into the very depths of existence.

Another mystic is Nikolay Raynov (1889-). His personality is too indistinct to be accurately definited, but it is

very broad and the author pursues various inner and outer goals which he approaches by different paths. Thus some productions of Raynov are purely mystical; others are symbolistic; a third group are realistic and even naturalistic. All these works are nevertheless the work of one spirit in its eternal striving for the remote, the mysterious element of life; all are extremely ornate, stylistically refined, highly colored (in this we fell the influence of the fact that Raynov is a painter and a professor in the Academy of Art); all draw directly or indirectly on the wealth that is hidden in the mystical legends of the people, the old apocryphal religious tales and the philosophy of India. The most interesting and the most perfect are the fantastic tales of the old past of Bulgaria, his "Bogomil Legends", and also a novel which describes the life and works of Jesus Christ, in which he gives a surprisingly vivid picture of old Jerusalem and he brings out the figure of Christ with surprising distinctness.

There is a certain mystical coloring also in the works of the leading Bulgarian symbolist, Todor Trayanov (1882-), who for a long time seemed exceptional among the poets of his country for his abstractness, his remoteness from real life, a mistiness which is unnatural to a Bulgarian and which he acquired in Germany. The war forced Trayanov to descend from the clouds and to write the "Bulgarian Legends", his most beautiful works, full of the enthusiasm of a suddenly awakened love for his country and of definite sympathy with its sorrows. Trayanov tries to peer into the fate and future of his country and in his latest work "The Song of Songs", he has risen to splendid prophetic utterances.

538 Although Trayanov is the chief of the Bulgarian symbolists, the most gifted representative of the school is not he nor the uneven Lyudmil Stoyanov, the author of several collections of verse and some dramas, but Dimcho Debelyanov (1887-1916) who died an early but heroic death in the war in 1916. The entire work of this poet is included in one small volume with barely 50 poems. Quantity is not decisive. Botev wrote scarcely 20 poems and is accepted as the great master of Bulgarian verse. Debelyanov with his small volume is the master of the younger symbolists and perhaps the greatest poet of the modern period. No other of the younger men approaches him artistically in his melodious verse, his depth of feeling, his sincerity, his warmth, his acceptance of suffering which gives his poetry a heroic note. No other poet combines such simplicity and complication and depth in his feelings. No other poet can so take refuge from life in the most abstract images and symbols and no one else has his purity and his keen vision which are reflected in every strophe of his songs. The fundamental motif of Debelyanov is the yearning, the suffering of the homeless— and yet from this theme he does not derive a feeling of hopelessness but a quiet reverence before life, an assertion of existence.

The death of Debelyanov was an irreplaceable loss for Bulgarian literature. This was cruelly shown by the poems printed during his lifetime as well as by those found after his death in his notebook, in which he speaks of the war with such simple but deeply inspired thoughts and in which he gives such a true picture of it, that none of the authors of the hundreds of patriotic stories and

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verses produced in Bulgaria between 1915 and 1918 can 538
be compared with him.

The only poet who can console Bulgaria for allowing Debelyanov to die in battle, the only one who can be compared with him, is his comrade Nikolay Liliyev (1886-). Liliyev is perhaps a more delicate master than Debelyanov; his verse sounds more tender and more intangible; his themes which he chooses from the torments and yearnings for solitude, show a man of more sensitiveness and come from the mysterious depths of personality. But Liliyev is further from life than Debelyanov; his art is not so spontaneous; we do not feel the fervor of a soul which thrills in common with the whole of nature. So the significance of Liliyev lies in a different field from that of Debelyanov, in the field of purely artistic poetry, in which Liliyev is indisputably the master. His language is more melodious than is that of Yavorov, with a more delicate rhythm, greater variety in shadings, greater lightness of imagery. The great achievement of Liliyev can be seen in his influence on all later poets, who without exception owe to him the elegance which marks their verses and is one of the outstanding features of modern Bulgarian poetry.

Nikolay Liliyev, although he is counted a symbolist works not with this group (which centres around the journal Hyperion, edited by Trayanov) but with another centre which has been in existence for ten years and is composed of writers of various tendencies who desire to call attention to the external form of their works, the language and style, who strive to develop as far as possible the means of expression, as they try to broaden the internal content of their works. In other words they

538 are following in the footsteps of Pencho Slaveykov and Yavorov in raising Bulgarian literature to the same level as the literatures of other cultured poeples. Their organ is the journal Zlatorog (Golden Horn) which is edited by the critic Vladimir Vasilev and by Liliyev, and they strive in all their works for artistic perfection.

One of the best known members of the Zlatorog group is the master of the Bulgarian novel Yordan Yovkov (1884-). In his five volumes of stories and one novel Yovkov describes sympathetically the life of the villagers in the Dobrudja, his native province. Although is is a realist and his heroes are simple people, he never loses a sense of proportion and he never falls into roughness or into the improbabilities into which so many writers fall, when they seek to give an exact picture of life in a village and who apply the colors too thickly. For this reason Yovkov is not only an accurate observer and a good psychologist but he is also an excellent stylist with a live feeling of measure like a poet. He sees an aureole of beauty softening the rough places of life. He understands his heroes and he knows how to describe their humanity, their natural goodness and their noble feelings. This capacity for idealizing without distorting Yovkov has revealed in his two volumes of war stories, which include his masterpieces, and also in his other stories, especially "The Legends of Staroplanina" which he published later and which in language, in the liveliness of the descriptions, the clarity of his comparisons and in picturesqueness are one of the finest books in Bulgarian literature.

Among the other members of the Zlatorog group, we must mention one woman, E. Bagryana, who after several years of silence published in "Eternity and the

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Saint", a collection of deeply sensitive lyric poems, 538
which have a high place in Bulgarian poetry, since they reveal an abstract estheticism in form, a quality very much admired in Bulgaria, and they are also formally perfect and sincere, since they are drawn from life and have passed through the heart and soul of the author as well as through her mind and reason.

Another gifted poetess in the same group is Dora Gabe, the author of delicate and passionate feminine verses, and of some excellent stories from the life of the Dobrudja. She has a great influence on the development of literature for children and she is considered a master in this form of writing.

Georgi Raychev (1882-) also works in the Zlatorog group. He is a prominent novelist, the author of several well-constructed tales, with interesting and complicated psychological subjects based on the contradictions in the human soul, the hesitation between evil and good and the relations between man and woman. Raychev's story "Sin" is a well planned book and can be recommended as the best example of a Bulgarian psychological novel.

To the same group belongs one of the most promising of the younger writers, just 30 years of age, Angel Karaliychev (1902-), who in his first works won the admiration of all by his truly popular and yet naturally artistic language, his village themes, and the almost expressionistic fluidity of his stories. Karaliychev is developing well and is approaching the manner of Petko Todorov. He is apparently trying to walk in his footsteps, as we decide when we notice how he uses folk legends,

538 tales and songs with all their direct naivité and freshness for his elegant and originally constructed poetical works.

Among other members should be mentioned Vladimir Polyanov, a unique but not untalented novelist and Yordan Stubel, a poet of semitones and of unclear figures.

The Zlatorog once counted two other modern writers—the critic and essayist Konstantin Galabov and the most extreme of the modernists, Chavdar Mutafov. As a result of misunderstandings both men left their friends and formed their own group, the Strelets (Archer) which has almost the same aims but has a greater tendency to merge the native art with that of Western Europe, especially of Germany. (Both Galabov and Mutafov were educated in Germany.)

Among the members of the Strelets group, Chavdar Mutafov is the most interesting, for he after Geo Milev, a gifted but not definite poet— first tried to develop on Bulgarian soil the principles of expressionism as these were formulated in Germany by Franz Werfel, Kazimir Eischmid, Ehrenstein, etc. Although his experiment was somewhat artificial, since expressionism (the principles of which had taken root in Germany) was foreign to the realistic Bulgarian spirit— yet thanks to the fact that he was a talented writer with a keen sense for constructive style, excellent language, and much liveliness in beginning a story, he succeeded in producing valuable results, especially in some of his short stories and in his novel, the "Dilletante."

Another gifted young writer in the Strelets group is Atanas Dalchev, whose verses win attention by their

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original rhythms and their charm, although they are in rather inartistic form. 538

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The writers whom we have mentioned fall into three groups, Hyperion, Zlatorog, and Strelets, but there are some who stand alone and do not care to sacrifice their individuality or whose creative work is of more interest to them than the theoretical disputes between the groups, or they are not of an aggressive character and do not wish to have a tumult around them.

The first of them to be mentioned must be Dobri Nemirov, the best novelist of the present day, who continues the tradition of Vazov in his quiet realism and his fondness for purely Bulgarian themes. Steeped in this tradition, Nemirov, who has a really original style, a well-developed language and the ability to analyze characters and to portray spiritual conflicts, has written several well-received works of which we must name the story "Poor Luka" and the two novels "Case No. 9" and the "Brothers". The last is especially valuable, since it portrays the chief types of Bulgarians of the period before the liberation and throws light on several curious aspects of the Bulgarian soul with its present contradictions.

Another independent is Konstantin Konstantinov, who in his stories describes well and sympathetically the life of the small and dying provincial cities and gives his stories a social note and a resultant humane coloring.

We also find among the independents the two best Bulgarian dramatists of the past years: Stepan Kostov, several of whose comedies of manner with their humor

538 and keen observation have been produced by the theatres of Sofia and the provinces: and Ratcho Stoyanov, whose drama "The Masters" with its deeply felt poetry has had a great success.

Apart from the confusion of the groups there are working also Stiliyan Chilingirov, a poet of many years' standing who recently brought out a successful novel, Trifun Kunev, an author of excellent symbolistic poetry, Mara Belcheva, whose poetry is interesting because of its philosophic resignation, Nikolay Rakitin, whose songs are full of sunlight and color with their pantheistic descriptions of nature, and Vasil Petkanov who is a promising novelist well acquainted with the soul of the village.

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There are many other names which might be mentioned but it will be better not to list more names that will mean nothing to the foreign reader but to say a few words about Bulgarian literary criticism, which— whatever the writers may think about it— has been one of the chief causes for the flowering of Bulgarian literature.

Botev and Vazov, of course, owed nothing to criticism, but Pencho Slaveykov and his friends would not probably have reached their height if they had not been introduced to the public and supported by Dr. K. Khristich, a clever critic and essayist, whose writings are full of enthusiasm and of fervor with which he struggled for his beloved writers in the Misl(Thought), a journal which he founded and edited. The group of the Zlatorog, of which we have spoken, could not have trained and developed so many talented writers, had it not been for Vladimir Vasilev, a temperamental editor, and more than

that, his friend Boyan Penev, Professor of Slavonic 538
Literature and an essayist, whose influence on a long series of modern Bulgarian writers has been enormous. Another critic and essayist of a militant disposition is Professor A Galabov, thanks to whom grew up the Strelets group. To Bozhan Angelov, the literary historian and Ivan Radoslavov, the unwearied admirer of Todor Trayanov, the critic, we must credit the flowering of symbolism in Bulgaria, especially the symbolism of the Hyperion group. To still other critics and literary chroniclers as Vasil Pundev, Yordan Badev, Anna Kamenova, who is well acquainted with English and American literature, Malcho Nikolov and others, we owe the awakening of that interest in elegant literature, which is seen everywhere in Bulgaria and which is one of the most joyful signs of the cultural development of the country.

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With these brief characterizations of the leading Bul- 000
garian critics we will close our lecture. The author of these pages could scarcely have dared to compress the history of modern Bulgarian literature in a few pages, if he had not thought that some profit might be derived from it: that he might show to those who know little of Bulgaria, the name of which is scarcely met with in the political history of Europe, which has suffered so severely from the wars and the earthquake of 1928, that this country had won its right to stand amid the family of civilized nations and to receive the same rights and privileges as they. In less than one century, despite all the obstacles and misfortunes which it had met, it had brought itself to the level of those nations that had been progressing for two or three hundred years and it de-

served the help and sympathy of all nations and especially of America, which Bulgaria is imitating in its readiness to work, its courage, its democracy and its love of culture.

If the lecture can help in showing this abroad, the author will be satisfied.

"So be it! May there be profit for Bulgaria and understanding of its problems and its achievements."